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ABSTRACT

This summary of a report on strategies to improve education in Oakland (California) emphasizes that there is no magic solution to school reform and encourages ongoing community participation. The goal of school reform is a learning environment that enables all students to be competent, confident, conscious, and caring individuals and holds the school accountable for the delivery of equal education. The following conditions are essential: (1) effective school leadership; (2) rigorous, challenging curriculum and instruction; (3) effective staff; (4) parents as partners; (5) safety and security; and (6) outstanding district leadership. The following problems must be overcome: (1) low expectations of students; (2) inadequate funding; and (3) poor teacher preparation that leaves teachers unable to deal with diversity. The following change strategies are outlined: (1) build a system of staff renewal as the centerpiece for positive change; (2) construct a system of accountability for student outcomes; (3) make effective and equitable use of personnel and resources through planning; (4) demand honest assessment, aligned with community expectations, that charts a course of action; (5) use communication to empower all participants in the teaching and learning process; (6) promote the coordination of multiple community resources to respond to the life circumstances of students; and (7) commit to the principle of equity in the allocation and development of resources. A map illustrating elementary school boundaries is included. Statistical data are presented in nine graphs. (FMW)

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REPORT SUMMARY

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GOOD EDUCATION IN OAKLAND

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Strategies for Positive Change

COMMISSION FOR POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE OAKLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

REPORT SUMMARY

GOOD EDUCATION IN OAKLAND

Strategies for Positive Change

**Commission for Positive Change
in the Oakland Public Schools**

September 1990

For additional copies of the report summary, or to obtain the full report, write to the Commission at Box 33, 5825 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland, CA 94609 or call (415) 643-9103.

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The Commission expresses appreciation to the hundreds of people — community participants, panelists and school district personnel — as well as the host organizations and funders, who have generously contributed to the Commission process.

OPEN LETTER

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The Commission's report, merely the second step in a four part process, sets the stage for implementation planning and actual implementation. Our optimism is based in part on important examples of positive change already evident in the school district.

The Commission recognizes that the schools alone cannot do all that we want, but we are convinced that the schools and the community working together can.

OUR GOAL

Success for Students 5

The learning environment must enable all students to be competent, confident, conscious and caring individuals.

The Commission found that despite apparent neutrality of budget and staffing allocations within the district, disparities exist in teaching and discipline practices and result in disparate student outcomes from school to school and among ethnic groups.

The standard to which we will hold our school district is the delivery of equitable education.

OUR VISION: Schools

Where Students Succeed 12

To achieve our goal, these conditions are essential:

Effective School Leadership

Effective leadership — through team work — marshals staff and resources around a common vision of high academic achievement for all students.

Rigorous, Challenging Curriculum and Instruction

Teaching actively engages and inspires students and effectively transmits the skills, attitudes and competencies that are necessary to prepare them for full participation in the civic, economic and cultural life of the community.

Effective Staff

Effective staff guides students through the learning process, challenging students to try their best, motivating them to persist and helping them to succeed.

Parents as Partners

Parents, as partners in the teaching and learning process, send the vital message that students' efforts and accomplishments are important.

Safety and Security

A safe and secure school environment assures the physical and emotional well-being necessary for learning.

Outstanding District Leadership

Outstanding district leadership maneuvers within budget constraints, seizes revenue opportunities and sets and carries out fair, informed policies driven always by student needs and outcomes.

THE CHALLENGE

What Must Be Overcome 17

The Commission's fact-finding panels provided insight into the extent of the challenge we must meet to achieve our vision. The panels found obstacles to student success such as low staff expectations for students, inadequate funding for education, and poor teacher preparation in colleges and universities that leaves teachers ill-equipped for the diverse cultures, classes, values and languages among the students they teach.

STRATEGIES

For Positive Change

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The following strategies will enable the district to realize our vision of good education in Oakland:

Staff Development

Build a system of staff renewal as the centerpiece for positive change. This requires that the district acknowledge that its most important resources are its people. Therefore, staff development must reach all district employees, persist over time, be tailored to staff-identified needs and to the district goal of high academic achievement for all students.

Accountability

Construct a system of accountability for student outcomes. This requires the district to have precise definitions of roles and responsibilities, to vest authority that matches the scope of responsibility, and to develop clear standards of evaluation with appropriate consequences.

Planning

Make effective and equitable use of personnel and resources through planning. This requires the district to coordinate central and school site planning and provide adequate time and the technical support needed to institute the use of planning as an essential management tool that drives the district toward excellence.

Assessment

Demand honest assessment, aligned with community expectations, that charts a course of action. This requires the district to set goals that reflect high expectations, then monitor progress and make informed decisions on the basis of objective data. These informed decisions must discard failures, strengthen efforts that show potential and replicate successes.

Communication

Use communication to empower all participants in the teaching and learning process. This requires the district to provide clear, timely, complete information which allows for a respectful, informed dialogue that engages students, school staff, parents, other caregivers, central administration and the Board of Education.

Support for Students

Promote the coordination of multiple community resources to respond to the life circumstances of students. This requires the district to collaborate with other agencies and community partners. The district and collaborating youth services agencies must have a thorough understanding of student needs and must approach collaboration with creativity, cultural openness, and a recognition of the community's strengths and expertise.

Resource Management

Commit to the principle of equity in the allocation and development of resources. This requires the district to target existing personnel and financial resources, aggressively seek additional resources to improve outcomes for all students and ensure equitable results among the schools.

NEXT STEPS

Making It Happen

22

The Commission will advocate for the implementation of the strategies and intends to serve a dual role over the next three to five years: we will work in concert with the district to develop and mobilize resources; and monitor the district's progress, reporting periodically to the community.

EPILOGUE

There Is No Wizard

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In Dorothy's travels to Emerald City, we find inspiration for the Oakland community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools wishes to acknowledge and express appreciation to the hundreds of people who generously contributed to this report. For being so adept at capturing the input from hundreds, we thank the principal writer, Martine Makower of the Urban Strategies Council, who showed endless patience and the determination to get it right.

For their keen and meticulous labors in analyzing the data for this report, we thank George L. Washington, Jr. and Joaquin Herranz of the Urban Strategies Council. We also thank Henry Izumizaki and Ed Ferran of the University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum for their vision, ever present support and logistical mastery.

For setting the stage for the Commission by endorsing this effort we thank the 1989-90 school board members: Alfreda Abbott, Sheila Jordan, Sylvester Hodges, Darlene Lawson, Patricia Monson, Kathleen Crawford and David Anderson.

Community Participants

The Commission's work and the content of this report have been driven by the expectations of the Oakland community. We thank the more than 1,000 people — parents, community members, teachers, principals, classified staff, students and others — who participated in meetings and hearings, wrote letters or called to provide valuable input and direction.

In communities in which the first language is not English, the Commission acknowledges that there is no communication without translation. We, therefore, thank the translators who allowed us to talk with community members in their primary language (Spanish, Chinese, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Laotian).

Panels

The fact-finding phase of the Commission's work provided a base of knowledge

about the Oakland public schools. This was done by participants on six panels: Education and Instruction, Administration and Management, the Teaching Profession, Finance, Structures and Schools in the Larger Community. We thank the scores of people — parents, teachers, principals, academics, business and community leaders — who devoted countless hours to assess the current conditions of the school district and present options for change.

Host Organizations

To be accessible to the community, the Commission held meetings throughout Oakland. We thank the following organizations and others that made their facilities available at school sites, churches and community-based organizations: Spanish Speaking Unity Council, the Oakland Museum, Beth Eden Baptist Church, Allen Temple Baptist Church, Centro Infantil de la Raza, Beacon Day School, Lincoln Elementary School, Highland Elementary School and Oakland High School.

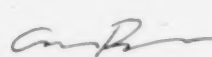
Special Thanks

As always there are those who go the extra mile. We offer our special gratitude to Lawrence Baack of PG&E, James Vohs of Kaiser Permanente, Denise Saddler-Lipscomb of the Oakland Education Association, Lyn Harlan of the League of Women Voters, Phyllis Waller of the Coro Foundation, Jorge Lerma and the members of Education Coalition for Hispanics in Oakland (ECHO), Susan Lubeck of the Urban Strategies Council and Professor Edward J. Blakely, the Chief Executive Officer of the University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum. And for their assistance, we thank Alameda County Superintendent of Schools William Berck and Assistant Superintendent August Scornaienchi. Our thanks to Susan Kelly, Noel Gallo and David Sibbet for helping to record and graphically present our work.

From the Oakland Unified School District, we thank Superintendent Richard "Pete" Mesa and his office staff, Sheri Silveira, Gail Taylor and Charlene Heyniger for their tremendous assistance and support. We also thank the school board staff Beulah John and Martha Maltbia. We thank Sherri Willis and the staff of the Public Information Office and Ken Mastro and the Mail Room staff for helping us to get information to district employees and families. We thank Jerry Ardisone and Gil Brenum and the Data Processing staff for responding to our numerous requests for information. And for their many hours spent interpreting and explaining data and information, we thank

Dr. Joseph Adwere-Boamah, Director, Office of Research, and Tom Fredrette of his staff, and Sue Woehrle, Assistant to the Superintendent.

With deep gratitude,



Angela Glover Blackwell
Co-Chair



Charles E. Schwyn
Co-Chair

On behalf of the
Commission for Positive Change
in the Oakland Public Schools

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The Rockefeller Foundation
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To the Oakland Community

A year ago, the Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools formed in response to the crises surrounding a budget deficit, allegations of scandal and a frustrating search for a superintendent. The Commission quickly learned from the Oakland community that the real and important issue was, and is, good education for all children. As a result, the Commission's work has focused on defining what we mean by good education and on creating strategies for the Oakland public schools to provide children with an education that prepares all of them to meet the challenges of higher education, work and full participation in society.

The report of the Commission's work charts a course to good education. However, the report is merely the second step in a four part process designed to create positive change. The process began with an assessment. The Commission convened community meetings, public hearings and fact-finding panels to learn what the community wants and expects and the facts about the Oakland public schools. Step two has been the development of the goals, strategies and information presented in the report and represents a synthesis of what we have learned through the assessment process. It identifies what must be achieved and calls for agreement on what must be done to bring about positive school change.

At this stage, we have not allowed our vision to be inhibited by limitations. We fully recognize that some of what we recommend will require more money; some will require negotiation through collective bargaining with various unions; and there are other considerations. We have pinpointed what must be done. In the next phases, the district, together with the community, will attend to how it can be done.

The Commission will work with the district to develop the implementation plan and to locate the resources needed to fulfill

our mutual ambitions. With a vision, a plan and resources aligned, the district can begin implementation and the community can expect to see change and measurable improvement. Together, we must persist until positive change is realized.

Why do we think the community and schools can create positive change? First, we *intend* to create change and we are committed to creating change. We see a national and local atmosphere ripe for change. If Oakland is to flourish, our schools must flourish. If the nation is to remain competitive, schools must improve. The Commission has learned that this community is determined to provide support and apply pressure at whatever levels may be required to see that positive change comes about. Moreover, the work we have done convinces us that the district has already begun working with the Oakland community and has demonstrated that it is receptive and open to the prospect of positive change.

Most convincing, perhaps, are the specific signs and places where positive change is already occurring. Before the Commission was formed, the district and the community joined forces to save and improve the school district's early childhood programs when the state threatened their closure. Widespread agreement on the tremendous value of the programs for our children provided the foundation for a focused and determined effort to assess and understand the problems, reach agreement on solutions, and make and carry out a plan implementing those solutions. In just a year's time, that collective effort has produced a remarkable turnaround. Today the district's early childhood programs are regarded as exemplary, a model in the state.

There is more good news. During the past six years, the district had six superintendents. Today, the district's educational leader is empowered to handle district manage-



ment and has a five-year contract to guide our schools. New management has already meant new approaches. For instance, the budget development process, historically last-minute and confusing, was presented to the board and the community with clarity and well ahead of the due date. The school year began, not with eleventh hour layoffs and recalls, but with newly recruited, energetic administrative personnel and about 250 new teachers. These newcomers to the district join a dedicated cadre of existing staff that has



sustained the educational process in Oakland through an era of turmoil, mistrust and scarcity. Many district staff have been key contributors to the Commission process; many others have expressed their optimism and hope for a system that can fully support its students and gain the community's confidence and pride.

Programmatic changes are evident, too. For the first time in five years, a curriculum department is in place, working to refine and refresh the content of what is taught in Oakland classrooms. A comprehensive health and safety committee, established to provide for the non-academic social and health needs of students, has targeted \$1.4 million in the first phase of programming for student support. In addition, much of what fell victim to the budget axe last year — such as music programs and sports — has been restored. There is, doubtless, more that should be mentioned here, but the fact is that change is occurring rapidly and on so many fronts that a comprehensive listing would swiftly fall out of date. These examples are enough to show why we feel hopeful.

Positive change is within our grasp. But we feel a sense of urgency: today's twelfth-graders will be tomorrow's graduates — what will we have done to assure their success? Today's preschoolers will be tomorrow's first-graders — will we have ready all that they need? The Commission advocates that we must serve all the children and that tomorrow is not soon enough. In this report we have laid out our community's goal, a vision of the conditions that must exist to attain our goal, and strategies for achieving the conditions. This community's aspirations for our children are high. We recognize that the schools alone cannot do all that we want, but we are convinced that the schools and the community working together can. We will settle for no less.

With hope and determination,

Commission for Positive Change
in the Oakland Public Schools

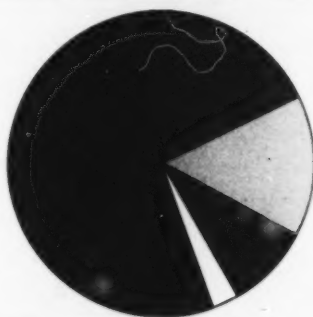
Success for Students

The purpose of education is to transmit from one generation to the next, the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and to prepare the young people for their future membership in society and their active participation in its maintenance and development.

Julius K. Nyerere

More than 90% of Oakland's 50,000 public school students are children of color. The majority are African American and they go to school with a growing population of Southeast Asian and Hispanic students and others representing a wealth of languages and nationalities. While most students speak English, 55 primary languages other than English are also spoken and nearly a fourth of the students are not yet fluent in English.

**Ethnic Composition
Oakland Public Schools - 1989-90**



- African American 57.3%
- Asian 16.2%
- Hispanic 15%
- White 8.8%
- Other 2.6% (Pacific Islander .9%, Native American .5%, Filipino 1.2%)

Source: Oakland Unified School District

Oakland's student population comes from more than 40 countries.

The people of Oakland share a common goal. We want the best for our children. Our children are our hearts, whether small and under foot, sassy and struggling for social acceptance, or grown and gone from home. Their laughter lifts us; their sorrows grieve us; their dreams are our dreams. School is the institution that we entrust — for 12 years or more — with the job of helping our children to grow and realize their dreams. The promise of American education is this: to take our children as it finds them and educate them.

To deliver on the promise, schools must help students to acquire the attributes necessary to succeed in school and beyond. The learning environment must enable all students to be competent, confident, conscious and caring individuals. By that we mean the following:

Competent students demonstrate a level of academic and social skill sufficient to perform well and reach their full potential.

Confident students exhibit a self-assurance that is reflected by curiosity and a strong belief in their ability to excel in a variety of settings.

Conscious students are knowledgeable and proud of their ethnicity, heritage and traditions, as well as respectful and appreciative of others. They understand their roles as contributors to their communities and the larger society.

Caring students exhibit compassion for others, recognize their role as models for younger children and take responsibility for securing a better future.

We must support our schools and hold them to a high standard of fairness and excellence to ensure that all of our children acquire these attributes and with them, the opportunity to reach the goal we hold for them.



The Mandate: Equity in Education

In the course of listening first-hand to what the community expects from the schools, commissioners heard repeated concerns about equity. Inequities are perceived between schools in the hills and schools in the city's flatlands; and different ethnic groups are perceived to have qualitatively different school experiences. The standard to which we will hold our district is the delivery of equitable education:

Equitable education means more than offering all students the same opportunity to attend schools that receive the same resources. It means providing for the learning needs of individual students to assure their success. A school system is equitable when students of every race, ethnicity, culture, language and income achieve at high levels and graduate. Equity extends to every student fairness, justice and the unbiased opportunity to succeed.

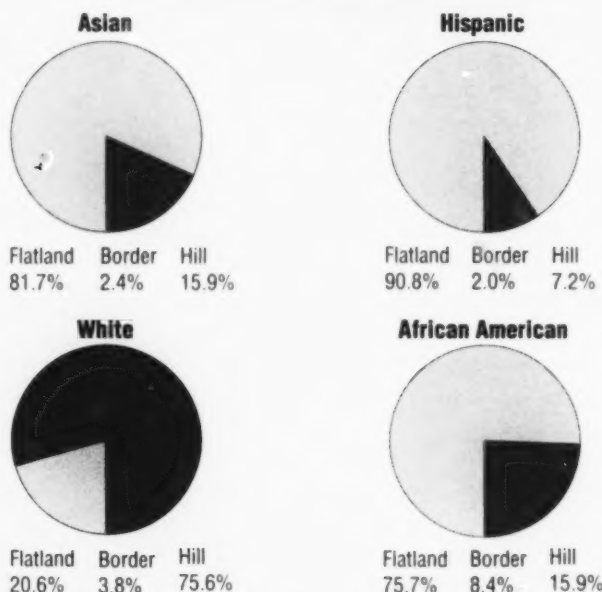
The Commission decided to address the issue of equity head-on, and began by

asking a series of questions about student outcomes, resources that are allocated to the schools, and teaching and discipline practices in the schools. A picture is emerging.

School Performance and Student Outcomes

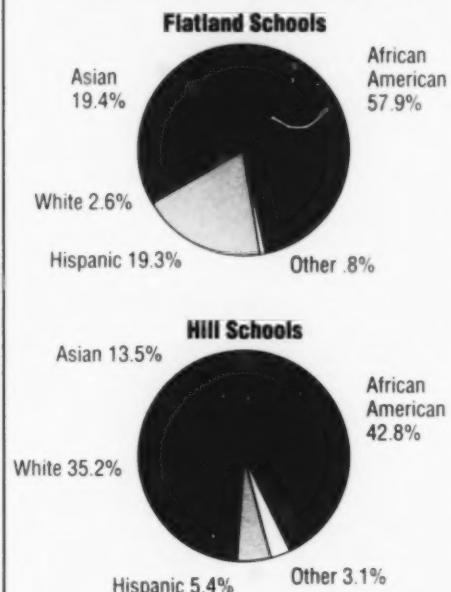
To get a sense of the overall quality of education offered in Oakland public schools, we compared Oakland schools' performance with the performance of schools in other California districts on statewide tests. During the last three years, 25 Oakland public schools ranked at or above statewide averages in reading or mathematics when measured by the California Assessment Program. Of the 25, 21 are elementary schools, three are middle or junior high schools and one is a high school. Among those schools, eight elementary schools and one junior high school consistently rank in the top one-fifth of all schools statewide. (These figures are based on data from 59 elementary schools, 16 middle and junior high schools and the 6 compre-

**Ethnic Enrollment by Region
Oakland Elementary Schools 1989-90**



Source: 1989 CBEDS for 1989-90 District Enrollment OUSD

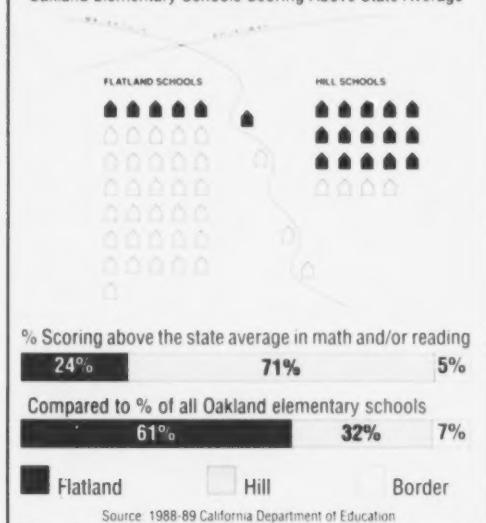
**Ethnic Composition by Region
Elementary Schools 1989-90**



Source: Oakland Unified School District

California Assessment Program Scores

Oakland Elementary Schools Scoring Above State Average



hensive high schools. They do not include the alternative or continuation schools.)

Looking at all district students, we found that by the twelfth grade, the disparities among ethnic groups are severe: 77% of white students ranked above average, with more than three-fourths of those scoring in the top 25%; on the other hand, 66% of African Americans, 69% of Asians and 68% of Latinos scored below average, with the majority of all three groups scoring in the bottom 25%.

To determine whether education within Oakland is equitable, we compared and analyzed student outcomes among the Oakland elementary schools in terms of geography (hills versus flatlands) and we looked at outcomes in terms of ethnicity. For purposes of this analysis, the 59 elementary schools were divided into those with attendance areas below MacArthur and west of Broadway or College Avenue (36 flatland schools), those east of Broadway or College Avenue and above MacArthur (19 hill schools), and those with attendance areas serving both regions (border schools). Hill, flatland and border schools are listed and shown on a map at page 10.

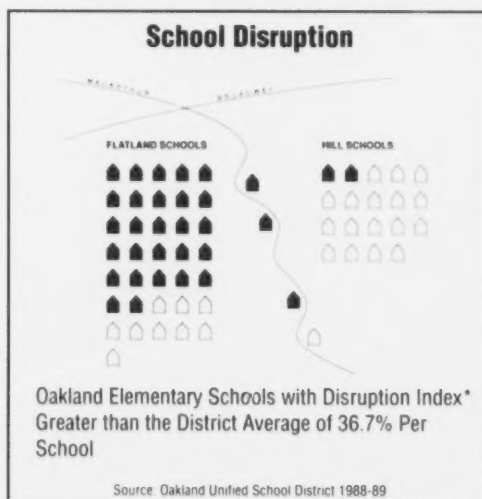
We analyzed student test scores within all the elementary schools performing *above*

average to learn how the ethnic groups fare. In virtually every instance, we found a majority in each ethnic group did perform above average. However, students who are white were more likely to surpass the average than students of other ethnic groups, followed by Asian students, with Latino students less likely and African American students least likely to outperform the average. Among elementary schools with performance hovering just *below* average, we found Latino and African American students twice as likely as their white or Asian counterparts to perform below average.

While there are students of every ethnic group who surpass state averages, white students are more likely than their peers to outperform the state averages. The indicators of student outcome show that some schools throughout the district are surpassing state averages, but most are in the hills.

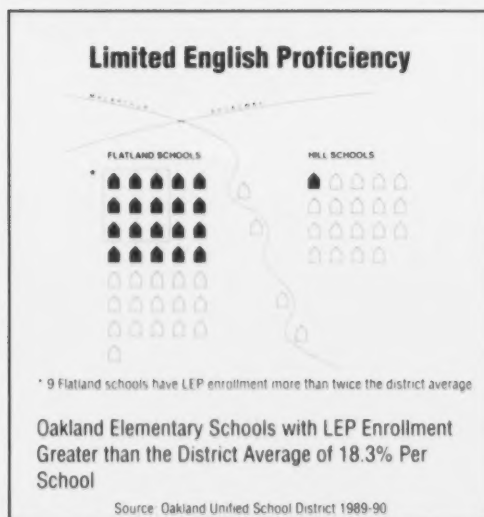
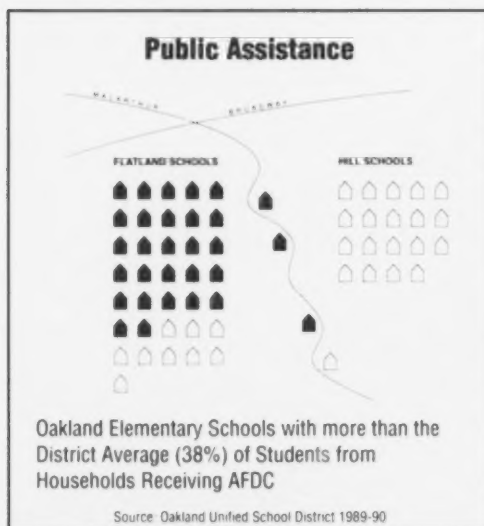
Student Characteristics

The following three charts indicate that schools in the hills are least likely to serve students who transfer from one school to another during the school year, are poor, or speak a home language other than English.



*Note: The disruption index is computed by adding the number of student withdrawals and entries at a school and dividing

that sum by the school's enrollment. The result is then multiplied by 100. The outcome is a figure that expresses the instances of disruption from student mobility at a school relative to the school's enrollment size. The higher the index, the greater the disruption a school experiences from student mobility. The index is computed for student mobility from October to May to capture the period when student enrollment is most stable.



Resources and Practices

To understand the differences between hill and flatland schools, we ranked all the

elementary schools in terms of several characteristics, from better to worse, and only at that point did we identify which schools were in the hills and which were in the flatlands.

The overall picture in terms of district resources is this:

- Budget and staffing allocations appear to follow per-student formulas for the general (unrestricted) budget that do not favor any geographic region.

- Schools with a high concentration of low income students performing below average that fit the eligibility formula, do receive additional funding to serve low performing students.

- Mentor teachers are selected for their demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom and provide support services to other teachers both inside and outside of their home school. Though not at every school, mentors are dispersed throughout the hills and flatland schools at the elementary level.

- Staffing allocations appear to result in comparable class size throughout the district at the elementary level.

- Flatland elementary schools are more likely to have large enrollments and are more likely to be functioning in overcrowded conditions resulting in classes being conducted in libraries, basements and auditoriums. By contrast though, flatland schools are more likely to have a ratio of adults to students that is better than the district average.

This analysis does not take into account the extent to which resources provided by parents, foundation grants or community services and programs impact on schools throughout the district.

Despite the apparent neutrality of budget and staffing allocations, disparities are evident among teaching and discipline practices within the district. For example:

- The practice of suspending students is more frequently used in flatland schools and, throughout the district, it impacts most harshly on students who are African American. Districtwide, African American students comprise 55.4% of the elementary population, and account for 85% of suspension inci-

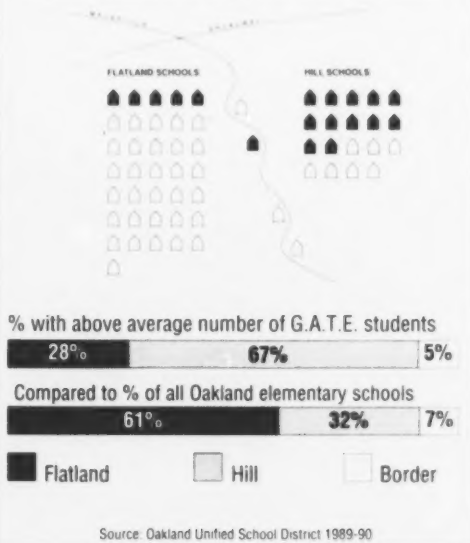
dents. White students comprise 9.6% of the elementary population, and account for 3% of suspension incidents. Hispanic students comprise 15.6% of the elementary population, and account for 6% of suspension incidents. Asian students comprise 17.5% of the elementary population, and account for 3% of suspension incidents.

- The practice of referring students for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs tends to impact more favorably on all students in the hills and disproportionately excludes Latino and African American students throughout the district. African American students comprise 55.4% of elementary population, and account for 30.7% of GATE population. White students comprise 9.6% of elementary population, and account for 35.8% of GATE population. Hispanic students comprise 15.6% of elementary population, and account for 6.1% of GATE population. Asian students comprise 17.5% of elementary population, and account for 26% of GATE population.

- Among 967 elementary students who were held back a grade in the 1989-90 school year, a disproportionate number were African American. They accounted for 62.5% of students held back and 55.4% of all elemen-

Gifted & Talented Education (G.A.T.E)

Oakland elementary schools with more G.A.T.E students than district average of 5.2% per school.



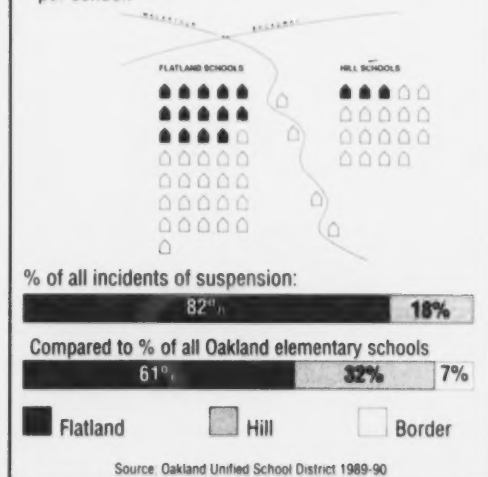
tary students.

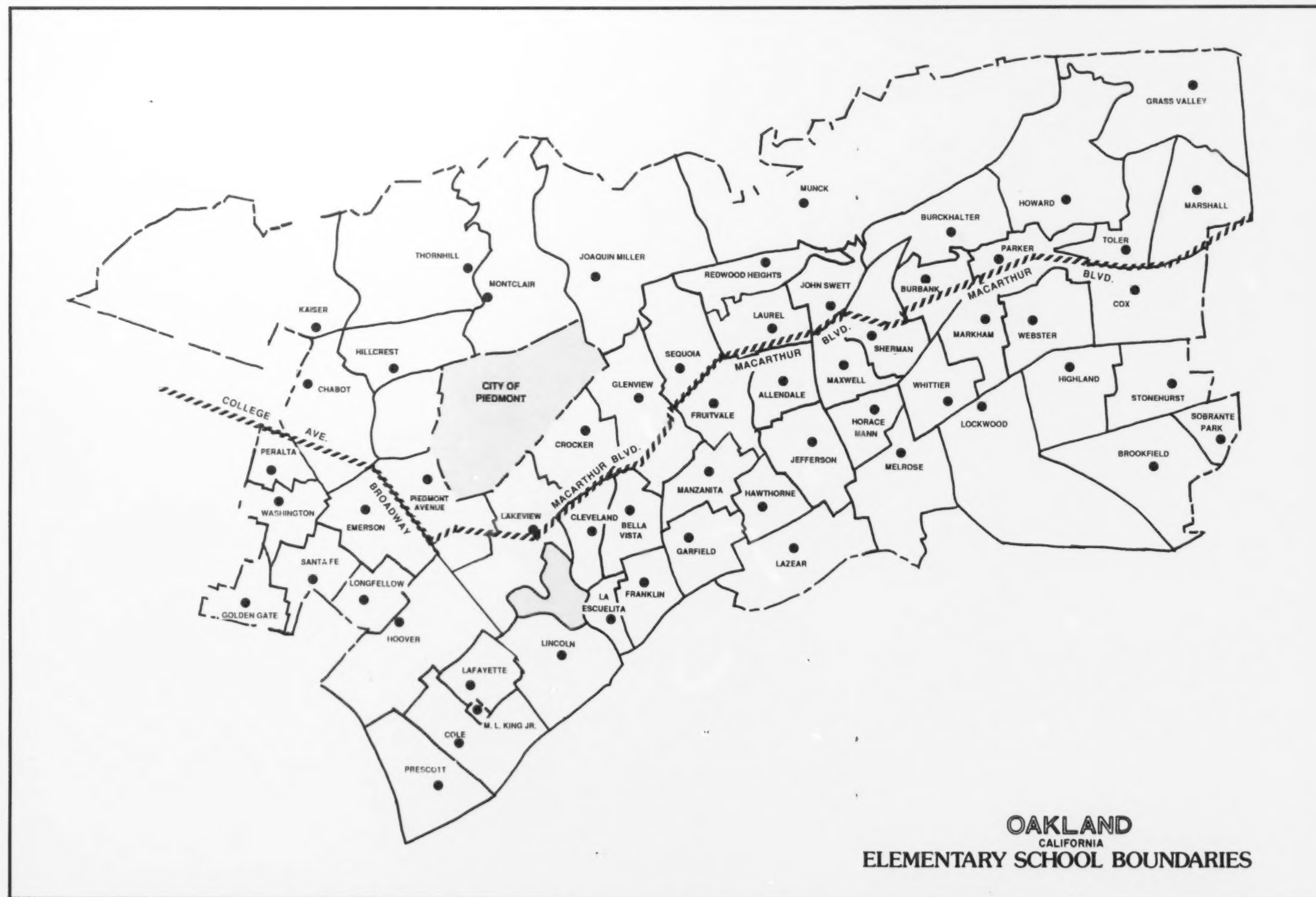
- African American students comprised 59% of the district population (including all school levels), yet among students assigned to special education for "learning disabilities," 73.3% were African American. Similarly, African American students made up 70% of students identified as "mentally handicapped."

We have described the differences in Oakland and have not sought to compare extensively with other districts. Yet, when Oakland schools are compared with other California districts in relative ranking (that is, to schools with populations similar to Oakland in terms of income levels, limited English proficiency, student mobility and parents' education) we are slightly above average. However, we do not seek nor find comfort in knowing that children of color suffer elsewhere. We know that they do. We are not satisfied with the opportunities accorded to our children. We must transform Oakland's schools into places where all students, including students of color, choose to stay and routinely surpass the averages, by every measure.

School Suspensions

Oakland elementary schools with incidents of suspension greater than the district average of 8.3% per school.





ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BY REGION

For purposes of analysis in the report, elementary schools have been categorized by their location and attendance areas:

The Oakland Unified School District includes a total of 59 elementary schools. Flatland schools (36 total) refer to schools below MacArthur and west of Broadway or College Avenue. Hill schools (19 total) are those east of Broadway or College Avenue and above MacArthur. Four schools did not clearly fall in either of these categories and are referred to as Border schools.

Flatland (36)

Allendale
Bella Vista
Brookfield
Cleveland
Cole
Cox
Emerson
Franklin
Fruitvale
Garfield
Golden Gate
Hawthorne
Highland
Hoover
Jefferson
M. L. King Jr.
La Escuelita
Lafayette
Lazeur
Lincoln
Lockwood
Longfellow
Horace Mann
Manzanita
Markham
Maxwell
Melrose
Peralta
Prescott
Santa Fe
Sherman

Hill (19)

Sobrante Park
Stonehurst
Washington
Webster
Whittier
Arts
Burckhalter
Chabot
Crocker
Glenview
Grass Valley
Hillcrest
Howard
Kaiser
Laurel
Marshall
Joaquin Miller
Montclair
Munck
Redwood Heights
Sequoia
John Swett
Thornhill
Toler

Border (4)

Burbank
Lakeview
Parker
Piedmont Avenue

- 61% of elementary schools are in the flatlands.
- 32% of elementary schools are in the hills.
- 7% of elementary schools are on the border, with attendance areas that serve both flatlands and hills.

Schools Where Students Succeed

There are schools in Oakland and across the country that are helping all children — whether Latino, African American, Caucasian, Native American, Asian, rich or poor, in stable families or in families with problems — to succeed. The keys are the same:

- Effective school leadership
- Rigorous, challenging curriculum and instruction
- Effective staff
- Parents as partners
- Safety and security
- Outstanding district leadership

Without question, some students thrive despite the absence of one or more of these conditions. The issue however, is not that some students thrive, but that too many do not. Our goal is success for every student, and it cannot be achieved without commitment to this vision.

Effective School Leadership

Effective leadership — through team work — marshals staff and resources around a common vision of high academic achievement for all students.

What We Expect

A competent principal is the hub of an effective school leadership structure. The principal must facilitate the creation of a distinct school community and a cohesive vision of the school's goals, in which excellence is demanded by students, staff and parents. The principal must hold staff accountable for meeting high standards, provide support to those who need it, honor those who excel and effectively use existing processes to move out those who consistently perform poorly. The principal must have authority over areas of responsibility to manage resources effectively.

The principal must build teamwork among staff, embrace the cultures of the

community, ensure effective communication among staff and families, share decision-making, and institute consistent, constructive problem-solving practices. The principal must cultivate positive links between the school, the neighborhood and the larger community in support of students.

Rigorous, Challenging Curriculum and Instruction

Teaching actively engages and inspires students and effectively transmits the skills, attitudes and competencies that are necessary to prepare them for full participation in the civic, economic and cultural life of the community.

What We Expect

Students must learn how to learn, read, write, compute, think and care deeply about the world in which they live. The curriculum must be designed to provide students with skills, knowledge, understanding and processes of critical thought. Teaching must be of sufficient interest and value to hold the students in school.

- To accomplish this, the content of the curriculum must be challenging, dynamic and must reflect the student's historical and cultural experiences as well as bring contemporary social reality into the classroom.

- The methods of instruction must engage students as respected and self-directed learners, inspiring confidence, deeper inquiry and discovery.

- The intent of the teaching experience must be to reinforce and respect the total human development of the students.

- Instruction must include firm, fair and consistent discipline and a system of classroom management that encourages positive student conduct and participation.

- Curriculum and instruction must prepare all students — regardless of their



circumstances — for the widest range of career and educational choices after graduation.

- Results must be regularly assessed to improve teaching practice.

Curriculum

The curriculum — what students are required to study — must challenge the mind and reflect the real world. There must be a district core curriculum taught to all students. Each school must have a curriculum plan that reflects the district's core curriculum and the needs of the student body. The school's curriculum must honor the contributions, and reflect the cultural values and precepts of the populations represented in the community and among the students it serves.

To assure the results we seek, early childhood development programs — acclaimed for their effectiveness in preparing children to succeed — must also be an integral part of the education program. Moreover, what children are asked to learn and do in the early childhood programs should be coordinated and articulated with the kindergarten and first grade programs.

Instruction

Instruction — how teachers present the curriculum to students — is the key to motivation and successful learning experiences for all students. Instruction must first and foremost inspire students to be active learners. To achieve that goal, teachers must come to school with high expectations, convinced that every child can learn. The teachers must set a tone and rapport, expect student success and do everything possible to insure it.

Instruction must take into account the learning needs of the students. For instance, students whose proficiency in English is limited require bilingual instruction or other effective support for their cognitive and language development. Moreover, people of different cultures do not socialize their children to learn in identical ways. For example, while one culture encourages children to ask

questions, another encourages quiet listening. While one culture rewards direct eye contact, another teaches that averted eyes are respectful. While the ways of one culture bring young girls and boys together for play and study, another culture separates them. Understanding these differences and their importance in the development of appropriate instructional techniques is essential.

Effective Staff

Effective staff guide students through the learning process, challenging students to try their best, motivating them to persist and helping them to succeed.

What We Expect

Staff members who believe all children can learn, demand and get the best from them, are the heart of the school. We expect all staff to cooperate with their co-workers, the secretaries, teachers, custodians, instruc-



tional assistants, food service workers, campus supervisors, buildings and grounds workers, counselors, nurses, psychologists, principals, other staff and administrators who share responsibility for the school climate and student outcomes.

All their efforts are needed — in a team

approach — to create an outstanding school. Made up of people from diverse races, backgrounds and points of view, the staff must nonetheless work together to share ideas, solve problems and learn from one another and the students.

Staff must be unified by a common understanding and commitment to excellent student outcomes. The staff, working as a team, must ensure that students are rewarded and disciplined with consistency, firmness and fairness. Staff must model the attitudes, values and behaviors they expect of their students, particularly dignity, respect, competence and love of learning. They must be alert and responsive to students who face difficult life circumstances. Students who are hungry, homeless or otherwise troubled need the stability of school and the support of staff. The staff, in turn, need the support of community resources to see students through their troubles and help staff to keep those students positively connected to school.

The staff must enjoy good working conditions: fair compensation; clear roles, responsibilities and standards of performance; useful and regular evaluation; access to training and professional development; opportunities to have a say and make decisions that affect the areas of their responsibility; and recognition for outstanding work.



Parents* as Partners

Parents, as partners in the teaching and learning process, send the vital message that students' efforts and accomplishments are important.

**We recognize that children find themselves in a variety of circumstances and intend the term "parents" to include guardians, foster parents, grandparents and others who may act as primary caregivers.*

What We Expect

School staff must operate with the knowledge that parents love their children and want them to succeed.

A fundamental understanding must be reached among teachers and parents about their respective roles and responsibilities in supporting the children's education. Avenues for two-way communication are necessary to sustain the partnership. Where the primary language of the family is not English, schools must realize that *without translation, there is no communication.*

The Parents' Duties

Even if a parent never comes to the school, at least the following should occur from home:

- Make certain that children go to school regularly and on time.
- Show active interest by talking with children about school — their classes, teachers, friends, homework, worries and accomplishments.
- Emphasize the importance of good behavior, hard work, determination, respect for oneself and others, and do not be content with poor citizenship marks from school.
- See that studying is done regularly and limit television viewing to leave time for reading and other richer activities.
- Help the school to know and under-



stand your children, your culture and your community. Contact the teacher or principal with your ideas and concerns.

- Let school personnel know what you need and want in the way of support, information and responsibility.

The Teacher's Duties

Even if parent and teacher never meet, the teacher must still find ways to do the following:

- Communicate with parents about class materials, activities, requirements, responsibilities and expectations.
- Keep parents informed of student progress.
- Alert parents promptly to any problem, before it becomes serious.
- Let parents know specific ways they can help their children at home.
- Show respect for the family.

Bridging the Gap Between Home and School

Schools must maintain a respectful, welcoming and hospitable atmosphere for parent involvement. Staff must be sensitive

to differences that may cause conflict between the school culture and the home culture and work to insure that differences do not become barriers.

Parents as Advocates

Parents are the best advocates for their children; when schools earn their trust and confidence, they can become the best advocates for schools. Parents who share in decision-making, problem-solving and planning for school improvement come to understand the limitations, the opportunities and the issues.

Reciprocity

To cement the partnership, school facilities must be available before and after school hours to serve community needs for tutoring, recreation, adult education, parent-child activities and other uses that strengthen the community.

Need for "Community Parenting"

Even when a family cannot do so, the community must assure that every student experiences the caring and support of an

adult who conveys high expectations and provides personal encouragement for the student to learn and succeed. Parents should be encouraged to see themselves as "community parents," that is, concerned about the children who sit next to their children, because they all make up Oakland's future. Schools must be able to turn to individuals who will serve as mentors for children and to organizations that will offer students support, companionship, tutoring and counseling.

Safety and Security

A safe and secure school environment assures the physical and emotional well-being necessary for learning.

What We Expect

The factors that make for a safe school are inseparable from those that make for high academic achievement. Schools are not safe and secure when teachers and others hold low expectations, are disrespectful or unresponsive to the needs of students. Many times the bruises on a child's self image, ego or spirit hurt more and longer than the scrapes from falling or fighting.

Adults at the school, including parents and other caregivers, must work as a team to build a school climate of high expectations for student performance and behavior. All staff must be committed to a schoolwide code of conduct that honors learning and condemns racism. Staff must be vigilant in modeling and promoting such conduct. Adults should be firm, consistent and fair in administering discipline. When trouble arises, contact with the family must be prompt and supportive.

A safe environment on the routes to and from school is important; children should not have to contend with drug dealers or bullies. Such problems are city-wide and cannot be solved by the schools acting alone, but staff must work with parents, city agencies and the broader community to find ways

to minimize the impact of these problems on our children.

Outstanding District Leadership

Outstanding district leadership maneuvers within budget constraints, seizes revenue opportunities and sets and carries out fair, informed policies driven always by student needs and outcomes.

What We Expect

We expect district leadership that is outstanding by every measure. We expect the board to enact sound policies for the district that set the stage for attainment of the school site conditions essential to our vision for student success. The board must set goals and standards for evaluation of the superintendent that consider: the community's desire for excellent outcomes for all students; a staff that has the skill, training and support to achieve positive student outcomes; efficient and equitable management of district resources; full utilization of community resources in reaching the goals; and a school system that respects the community's ethics and values of honesty, diversity, fairness, equity and excellence.

The superintendent must attract and retain excellent, committed staff that reflect the ethnic, racial, cultural and linguistic diversity of Oakland. The superintendent should set clear goals and high expectations for all school employees and model the appropriate behavior and values, as well as demand them of others.

The superintendent must marshal district resources and allocate them equitably to achieve district goals. All district personnel must understand their roles and responsibilities, be held accountable for meeting high standards of performance and receive recognition for outstanding work. Program and budget planning must be coordinated to involve school sites and central staff, and must be driven by the district's education goals.

What Must Be Overcome

The Commission, through the panel process, engaged over 70 people in four months of fact-finding about the Oakland public schools. Their findings provided insight into the extent of the challenge we must meet to achieve our vision. To achieve what we expect, the following must be overcome:

- Inadequate training for principals that is not based on principals' assessments of their needs and fails to prepare them to assess teachers, share decision-making, create a positive atmosphere for learning, manage school site budgeting and make effective use of categorical and other program funds.
- The belief that some children cannot learn and that schools cannot produce for some children.
- Reluctance to make the case against poorly performing staff, fueled by cumbersome processes both locally and in state law and by inconsistent support from central administration.
- Inability of unions and district administration to temper the adversarial nature of their interests with advocacy for students and educational excellence.
- Teacher reliance on outdated materials and outmoded methods.
- Practices that gear curriculum and instruction to the narrow tasks and content of the standardized tests.
- Poor preparation in the colleges and universities that leaves many teachers ill-equipped to respond to the diverse classes, cultures, values and languages among the students they teach.
- Teachers who are unfamiliar with the schools' neighborhoods and resources.
- Textbooks that misrepresent or ignore the contributions of the peoples and cultures of Oakland's diverse community.
- Reluctance to acknowledge and confront the fact that some teachers in the district hold low expectations and harbor racial and cultural stereotypes of students and their

families.

- Tracking of students into classes or student groups that are ascribed low status and subjected to low expectations.
- Practices that isolate rather than integrate special education.
- Inadequate planning for consistent, quality programming in art, music and physical education programs at the elementary level.
- Challenges posed by newcomer students, some arriving with primary languages other than English and with traumas of war and separation; others, who begin school at the ages 7, 8 and 9 due to family dysfunction.
- Class sizes that are too large to meet the individual needs of some students.
- Insufficient staff development and follow up to acquaint staff with effective practices and develop capacity to use them.
- Teacher evaluations that fail to indicate strengths and weaknesses, do not recognize or acknowledge outstanding performance, and do not include the educational achievement of the students as part of the measure of effectiveness.
- Excessive reliance on temporary personnel, resulting in loss of continuity and lack of preparation.
- Shortage of qualified teachers, particularly teachers of color and language minorities.
- Insufficient attention to encouraging interest — particularly among language and ethnic minorities — in teaching as a profession.
- Low salaries and low morale, and an inability to effectively recruit sufficient staff.
- Poorly funded education at all levels that is reflected in inadequate staff renewal and development.
- Insufficient attention paid to encouraging instructional assistants to become credentialed teachers.
- Insufficient time for staff to plan or





work together.

- Government, private and community agencies that do not work in concert with each other or the schools to respond to the students' life circumstances.

- School staffs that do not mirror the races, languages and cultures of their student population.

- Classified staff who do not see themselves or who others fail to see as significant members of the staff team.

- Lack of knowledge or respect for the strengths and cultural values of African American, Chicano, Latino, Native American or Asian families.

- The belief of some that parents do not care about the educational development of their children.

- Practical barriers such as communications sent home in English only, not available in the language spoken by parents.

- Viewing parents as problems that teachers must deal with, rather than as partners.

- Inadequate *community* response for students needing adult support when a parent is incarcerated, drug-dependent or otherwise unavailable.

- Feelings of inadequacy or alienation among some parents who are themselves unschooled or unfamiliar with the educa-

tional system and its expectations.

- Unwillingness among staff to plan and prepare for productive family-school connections and a tendency to overlook or exclude parents from school site planning.

- Overburdened teachers faced with an array of students' needs that, left unaddressed, impair the students' ability to study and achieve.

- A high rate of student mobility — students transferring from school to school — that is disruptive in two respects: to the classroom and to the individual student.

- Fragmented and depersonalized service systems in and outside the schools that do not address the needs of the whole child within the family context.

- Proliferation of referrals, suspensions and expulsions reflecting discipline practices that are inconsistent, unfair and pegged to the notion that when trouble arises, the solution is to remove the student.

- The presence of weapons and intruders on a few campuses and the perception of schools or the environs as dangerous places.

- Community mistrust, distance, resentment and insecurity that result from the disparate quality of education from school to school in Oakland.

- Inadequate board training and staff support for the complex issues which board members face.

- Inappropriate pressures on board members that shift the focus away from what is best for the students and result in compromises that serve no one well.

- The board — with three new and four incumbent members — and the new superintendent, must find their way at a time when the district is in poor fiscal condition.

- An attitude among some that the school district is an employment agency rather than an educational institution.

- An overriding view of the system as inferior and mismanaged, that overlooks many good programs and good people who have sustained their efforts despite adversity.

For Positive Change

The Commission has identified strategies to achieve our vision: schools where students succeed. The following seven strategies will lead to the conditions necessary for learning. The Commission arrived at these strategies via several steps. First, the Commission launched its fact-finding panels to learn about current conditions in the Oakland public schools. Simultaneously, commissioners held a series of community meetings to listen to the community's expectations, needs and concerns about the schools. The product of those community meetings was the "Community Agenda for Positive Change." The strategies emerged as recurring themes from the panel reports and the community input. The strategies are systemic in concept; what they suggest applies at every level of district operation and decision-making. No single strategy can bring the results we expect; they must be implemented in unison.

Staff Development

Build a system of staff renewal as the centerpiece for positive change.

- The district must acknowledge that its most important resources are its people, and must prepare them to meet the goal of high academic achievement for all students.

- To prepare its staff, the district must offer staff training, opportunities for professional growth and exposure to the state-of-the-art in teaching and learning. Staff development must be designed to reach all staff, continue over time with follow-up and support, and be tailored to staff-identified needs and the district's educational goals.

- In addition to boosting staff preparation for particular job functions in and out of the classroom, staff development must address the fundamental areas of planning and assessment, teamwork, conflict resolution,

and issues of race, ethnicity, culture and language as they impact on teaching and learning.

Accountability

Construct a system of accountability for student outcomes.

- Accountability begins with the board of education, which sets policy for the district educational program and budget. The board is accountable to the community.

- The superintendent is responsible for carrying out the board's policies through day to day management of district personnel and resources. The superintendent also builds school-community relations and is accountable to the board.

- School site personnel are responsible for implementing the educational program and maintaining a positive environment for learning.

- The precise roles and responsibilities — from board members and superintendent throughout the ranks — must be spelled out and communicated to all staff and the community.



• Staff must have authority to match the scope of their responsibility, with clear standards of evaluation and appropriate consequences. Success must be measured in terms of student outcomes.

Planning

Make effective and equitable use of personnel and resources through planning.

• To avert financial deficits and promote programmatic effectiveness, the district must coordinate planning—central office and school site—and allot adequate time and technical support to the process.

• Central planning should encompass facilities improvement, facilities management to address overcrowded conditions, program evaluations, proposals for innovations and change, staff recruitment and the coordination of community resources to support schools.

• The district's five year plan must set out the district's goals with the tasks and a timetable for implementation that will guide its work and provide a measure of accomplishment and accountability.

• Dramatic improvement will not occur without planning at each school site. Schools must set goals and concrete plans to achieve them, designed by those who must implement the plans. School site planning should focus on student outcomes and address the needs of the school population. Every school must commit to a planning process that builds consensus by involving staff, students, parents and other caregivers, interested community organizations and individuals.

Assessment

Demand honest assessment, aligned with community expectations, that charts a course of action.

• The district must set goals that reflect high expectations for student achievement, teacher performance and school progress. The district must develop measures that

fit the community's aspirations for performance.

• In the final analysis, focus must be on students, rather than averages. While school averages provide useful information about progress, the success of some students cannot be viewed as an acceptable trade-off for the disappointing performance of others. Data must be collected and accessible in disaggregated form, so that school performance can be analyzed and understood in terms of individual student progress over time, and in terms of such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, primary language, educational disadvantage and student mobility (transfers and withdrawals during the year).

• The focus of assessment should be on improvement. Progress on all fronts should be monitored regularly, using multiple sources of evaluation and objective measures. Informed by objective data, the district will decide to discard failures, strengthen efforts that show promise and encourage widespread replication of successes.

Communication

Use communication to empower all participants in the teaching and learning process.

• To communicate and operate efficiently, the district must use technology supported by sound protocols and staff cooperation, whether the issue is calling home to follow up on excessive student absence or adjusting payroll to reflect a personnel change.

• Communication among central administration, school site staff and families is essential to build trust and reach a common understanding of expectations, roles and responsibilities. Orientation sessions, meetings, publications, and a telephone hot-line should be used to provide two-way access to information, with language translations to assure communication.

• The district must set benchmarks for positive change and report those, together with data about progress, to the community. Reports should highlight net achievement





gains as well as current status and should convey the district's goals and expectations.

Support for Students

Promote the coordination of multiple community resources to respond to the life circumstances of students.

- Some students have trouble learning because of needs that, though not academic, are inseparable from the educational process. These students need services that are comprehensive and effective in helping them and their families to overcome obstacles to successful participation in school.

- Because the schools alone cannot meet the non-academic needs of students, the district must develop partnerships with other county, city and community-based youth serving agencies.

- At each school, staff should have information about community resources, programs and services. Each school team should have access to a mechanism to connect students and families needing support with services.

Resource Management

Commit to the principle of equity in the allocation and development of resources.

- The quality of a child's education must not depend on race, ethnicity, language, income or an accident of geography: the district's financial and personnel resources should be allocated equitably to assure that throughout the district, each child receives a high quality educational experience. While not reducing quality at any school, resources for low-performing schools must be augmented to help those schools achieve on par with the best.

- An important aspect of management is efficient operation to maximize existing resources. Staff and facilities must be used to the fullest advantage. This requires the cooperation of labor unions and district employees at all levels.

- The city, county and the public, must find ways to bring additional revenues and resources to the schools, including local tax increases and private sector support. Good education in Oakland is everybody's responsibility.

Making It Happen

We have set out the challenge: to obtain dramatically improved results that reach all our students. This vision and these strategic approaches represent the completion of just two phases of the Commission's work. Still ahead are implementation planning and actual implementation. But we have arrived at the starting point.

Now the school district can finish its five-year educational and financial plan and incorporate the Commission's recommendations as an integral part. What we anticipate in the district's plan is a statement of the district goals and objectives, a detailed presentation of what will be done to attain those goals, how it will be done, and a timetable for implementation. A key element of the district's plan should be provisions for school-site plans that involve staff, parents and other caregivers in a process of needs assessment, goal setting and planning at each site. Site plans are essential because the changes we want for our students cannot be implemented without the commitment and enthusiasm of those who work at individual schools and those who depend on them. The district's five-year plan will be completed by December 31, 1990, and implementation should begin with the new year.

The Commission has several parts to play in the planning and implementation that lie ahead. As the district constructs its plan and helps schools to develop individual school plans, commissioners will interpret the strategies in this report and advocate for their inclusion. Once implementation is under way, the Commission will serve a dual role. It will develop resources — working in concert with the school district to secure foundation grants, business and private sector contributions and connections — in support of positive school change. In at least one in-

stance, this work has already begun. With the combined effort and resources of the school district and the Urban Strategies Council, an effort is under way to foster collaboration and develop partnerships in Oakland among public agencies, community-based organizations and the school district to address the non-academic support needs of students. The Urban Strategies Council has provided the district with access to research on state-of-the-art collaborations and consultation on the complexities of public agency funding sources to maximize the effectiveness of public and private sector spending for students in our schools. This effort is a direct outgrowth of the Commission's panel process and represents the kind of resource development, connections and larger community support for schools that must be sustained to bring about positive school change.

The Commission's second role is as monitor. It will report periodically to the community on the district's progress in achieving positive change. The Commission's reporting function is intended to keep the community attuned to outcomes for which the community must hold schools accountable, and alert to school needs for which the community must mobilize political and other support. The format of reports will be consistent over time, so they are readable and readily show progress or the lack of it. Measures of progress will be developed in consultation with the school district. The Commission will acknowledge improvement and promising efforts. Where progress falls short of objectives, the Commission will expect the district to develop plans for modification and refinement with timetables for implementation. We envision that the Commission will play these roles over the course of the next three to five years.

There Is No Wizard

You remember the story: Dorothy, injured in a tornado, falls into unconsciousness and has an elaborate dream in which she travels to the land of the Munchkins where she seeks help in finding her way back home to Kansas. The Munchkins give Dorothy a pair of magic slippers and instruct her to "follow the yellow brick road" to Emerald City where she will find the Wizard who can help her get home.

Along the way Dorothy meets a Scarecrow, a Tinman and a Lion. Each longs for something. The Scarecrow wants a brain; the Tinman wants a heart; and the Lion wants courage. Dorothy invites them to come with her in the hope that the Wizard can fulfill their wishes.

Dorothy and her new friends face numerous trials and tribulations on the road to Emerald City. The Wizard promises to grant their requests only if they can conquer the wicked witch. Together they overpower the witch, only to face disappointment upon finding that the Wizard is not a wizard, but a mere mortal.

In meeting the challenge, though, the foursome realize that they have within themselves the capacity to be what they want to be. The Scarecrow, who emerged as the strategist, had indeed proven that he had a brain. The Tinman, worrying and fretting about the well-being of the others, had demonstrated his compassion. The Lion had forgotten his fears in the face of extreme danger. And Dorothy had only to wake up, since she had never really left home at all.

Perhaps the strongest lesson is about unleashing your potential by daring to dream. First you have to believe that what you want to happen can happen: you must be able to visualize it. ("Maybe the Wizard could give me a brain.") Then you have to lay out a plan for how you're going to achieve what you

want. ("We'll follow the yellow brick road and ask the Wizard to help us.") But the story shows us that the best plans are those that lead to deeper understanding of our strengths and greater capacity to use our own resources. To achieve success you have to work hard and ultimately believe in yourself.

These basic truths apply to institutions as well as individuals. The Oakland Unified School District has languished for many years as a less than outstanding institution. It has not set goals of excellence for itself or for its students. When people from time to time have verbalized high expectations, these have not been accompanied by a shared vision for all students and a plan of action. Many of those who have wished for excellence in the Oakland public schools have sought to rely on wizards in the form of a superintendent, a trustee, a new test or technology.

There is no wizard. If the Oakland public schools are going to change, it is up to the people who make up the school district and those who depend upon it to demand and work for change. There is no need to put new brains in our children; they already have perfectly good brains that need only to be challenged. We don't need new hearts to rid the district of racism, low expectations, and defeatism. What we must do is set standards for behavior and accountability with consequences for those who cannot or will not produce the results we seek. We don't need a single courageous leader to provide us with vision and direction. We are more capable than anyone of visualizing what we want for our children and developing plans and strategies for achieving our goals.

It's time for the people of Oakland to click our heels three times and wake up. We can create excellence throughout our district. We have the power to do that. There is no wizard. And there's no place like home.

